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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the role of a college instructional designer (ID), asserting that every college needs one. The field of instructional design has become especially important since the introduction of technology into the educational system. These individuals are knowledgeable about using technology to enhance teaching and learning. IDs help faculty meet the needs of students by suggesting the use of the most effective tools, resources, and strategies available. Colleges would do well to employ IDs for two important reasons: faculty need ongoing support to understand the growing realm of teaching methods and strategies, and students need to have a well-equipped teacher who can teach in the information age. The California Community College Academic Senate recommends the inclusion of IDs in the educational staff to help faculty create new courses or adapt old ones. IDs can suggest teaching strategies and techniques that faculty may not be aware of, can make recommendations on how to deliver course materials, activities or lessons, and can assist faculty with the actual development of their teaching materials. They can also bring their technologies of choice into the classroom and evaluate the effectiveness of a lesson or activity. This document concludes with information on how to create an ID position and use it as part of a team approach. (CJW)

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"Why Every College Needs an Instructional Designer to Support Faculty Innovation"

This paper is based on a presentation from the League for Innovation Conference held in Anaheim, California, November 16, 2000. The presentation was conducted by Heidi King, Karla Frizler Octavio and Scott Vigallon, representing the @ONE grant project funded by the California Community College State Chancellor's Office. The target audience was community (2-year) college faculty, staff and, particularly, administrators.

The presentation (in PowerPoint 97/98 format) can be downloaded from the @ONE website: http://one.fhda.edu/services/ppt.htm

What *is* an Instructional Designer?

The term "Instructional Designer" has become a buzz-phrase in the field of education. However, many do not understand what the role of an Instructional Designer is, and why we do what we do. In a nutshell, we are focused on best teaching practice, and helping faculty meet student needs using the most appropriate and effective tools, resources and strategies available.

Because they have become more popular during the Information and Internet Age, Instructional Designers are often mistaken for Technology Trainers, Help Desk, Lab Managers and other technical support staff. The reality is that Instructional Designers work well as part of a team comprised of all these roles. However, to expect one person to serve all these functions is not only unrealistic, but downright exploitative. Ideally, each of these people provides the following service:

- Technology Trainer - helps faculty learn how to use software applications, such as Microsoft Word or PowerPoint
- Help Desk Staff - answers questions regarding software and hardware, to help faculty troubleshoot technical problems (e.g. "I can't upload my web page to the college server!")

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- Lab Managers - oversee lab equipment & environment, install software and hardware

Though most Instructional Designers have some level of expertise in the area of education technology, they are not necessarily technology specialists, nor should they be. Rather, they are specialists on how best to use technology to enhance teaching and learning, depending on the environment and the individuals involved. For an Instructional Designer, it is better to have a small amount of familiarity with a wide variety of technologies, rather than deep knowledge about just a few products.

Why Every College Needs an Instructional Designer

Faculty need ongoing support

With the current movement toward a constructivist, learner-centered classroom, many faculty need to learn new teaching and learning methods, theories, strategies and approaches. There are those who already know these and are utilizing them in their classrooms. Still, such faculty will need the Instructional Designer's support when they begin to integrate technology into their curricula because of the variables and challenges that technology presents. For example, an instructor who is experienced with collaborative learning techniques in the classroom might not be aware of the nuances of designing and implementing a group assignment online.

Furthermore, there are still a substantial number of faculty who cling to the teacher-centered, lecture-test model. These instructors not only need the Instructional Designer's support to move them away from the traditional teaching model and into the learner-centered model, but they also need support to integrate technology into their curricula.

All faculty are also expected keep up with changes in teaching and learning tools which may help themselves and/or their students. With technology tools constantly changing and evolving, it is unrealistic to expect individual faculty to keep up with the latest developments. Rather, an Instructional Designer familiar with the latest in teaching and learning tools, and how theses tools enhance learning, can serve as a valuable resource.

Student needs

Today's students need faculty who are equipped to teach in the Information Age. With vast amounts of information online, students need to increase higher-order thinking skills. They need not only to search for information,

but also to assess its validity and value, and cite the source properly. Students also need to learn how to collaborate and communicate effectively, preparing for today's global workplace.

Academic Senate recommendation

In a recent publication titled "Guidelines on Minimum Standards for College Technology," the California Community College Academic Senate recommended that " ... colleges should provide [instructional design support for faculty]." This goes hand in hand with recommendations for appropriate technical support, available equipment, and more.

Local Issues for Colleges

Benefits to college

One audience for the community colleges is members of the workplace who need to upgrade or update their skills. Traditional, on-campus courses may not be appropriate for students who work full time. Private vendors are attempting to address the needs of this group for short-term, intensive courses offered at the convenience of the learner. Therefore, community colleges need quality online courses to compete in today's marketplace, as students now have alternative choices.

Instructional Designers can help faculty create new courses, or adapt traditional courses for an online environment, as it is substantially different from teaching in a traditional sense. This conversion is not something that happens overnight; thus, faculty need ongoing support during the online curriculum development process.

Another benefit for colleges is that faculty who are familiar with a variety of tools and resources are more likely to reach students with different learning styles. For example, an Instructional Designer can recommend to a faculty member that she use email activities which encourage ongoing discussion outside of class, to help reach shy, reflective thinkers.

How an ID supports faculty

Instructional Designers best help faculty when they are seen as peers. They approach the teaching and learning development process from a teaching perspective, and make recommendations on integrating technology as it will serve the teacher, students, or both. IDs can suggest teaching strategies

and techniques that faculty may not otherwise be aware of. For example, a faculty member wants students to continue class discussion outside of class time, and the Instructional Designer suggests using a bulletin board to post/collect messages. Instructional Designers can also make recommendations on how to deliver course materials, activities or lessons. For instance, an ID may recommend that faculty use web-based course-management software (e.g. WebCT or Blackboard) to develop and deliver an online course.

Depending upon the technical skill level of the ID, s/he can also assist faculty with the actual development of their teaching materials (e.g. a class website, computer simulation, slide show, etc.). IDs can also support faculty as they bring their technologies of choice into the classroom, dealing with room logistics, student access, etc., as well as evaluation of the effectiveness of a lesson or activity, plus necessary revision.

Creating an Instructional Designer position

In regard to creating an Instructional Designer position, the first step is to consider desired (or required) qualifications. In general, IDs should have a wide range of experience including training, teaching, project management and communications. A particularly valuable skill is the ability to convey technical concepts to non-technical people. IDs often serve as the liaison between technical support staff and faculty.

At most community colleges, the major hiring issues include whether or not to make the Instructional Designer a Classified or Faculty position. Most IDs would prefer to be faculty, as they will then be seen as a peer by the faculty they serve. Having the faculty label adds a layer of respect among colleagues. One common benefit of hiring IDs as Classified Staff is that colleges can offer higher pay for those positions (though they are typically 12-month). However, a more important drawback is that some colleges do not permit Classified staff to teach students. Providing IDs with ongoing opportunities for teaching experience is tremendously important, so they continue to empathize with the faculty they serve (and try new technologies and strategies themselves, before recommending them to others).

Another issue in the hiring process is to which department an Instructional Designer should report. Since IDs typically serve the entire college faculty community, they are often housed in an Education Technology Office or comparable entity. If hired as faculty, one solution might be to hire the ID into an Interdisciplinary Studies Department (or the area of their teaching expertise).

Team approach

Though the Instructional Designer has a wide range of experience and abilities, it is not realistic for this person to work in isolation as the only resource for faculty innovation. Instead, a team approach is best. Ideally, colleges should provide faculty with access to the following:

- Technology Trainers (to teach faculty how to use software applications)
- Help Desk Staff (for troubleshooting)
- Graphic or Multimedia Designers (to assist faculty with developing particular teaching resources)
- Lab Managers (to oversee faculty and student labs in which both can practice what they've learned and/or complete assignments)
- Instructional Designers to help faculty bring it all together.

How @ONE Can Help You

qIf your college were to hire an Instructional Designer, @ONE (a grant project funded by the California Community College State Chancellor's Office) has several resources available to IDs:

- California Community College Trainers' Network (share ideas & original training materials; locate other trainers with particular areas of expertise)
- Training Center (database of self-paced technology tutorials, articles, books, etc.)
- @ONE Faculty-training Packages (focused on integrating technology to enhance learning; may be downloaded and adapted by local college trainers, or faculty can use online, self-paced)
- eNEWS (biweekly email newsletter with information on technology training resources within the CCCs)

For more information about these technology-training resources and more, point your web browser to the @ONE site: http://one.fhda.edu, or contact @ONE via email or phone: info@onemail.fhda.edu, 408-864-8250.

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